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The American **MUSIC LOVER**

The Record Connoisseur's Magazine



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Edited by PETER HUGH REED

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The American MUSIC LOVER

FEBRUARY, 1943 • VOL. IX, No. 6

Editorial Notes

Our editorial notes of the past month brought us some very interesting and gratifying correspondence. When readers whom we know only as paid subscribers write and say "Thanks for working 70 hours a week! I'm glad to hear you have a prospective book on recorded music, etc.," we feel definitely stimulated. The narrow confines of the editorial chair do not always permit a broad view of the world of musical events, and even if one does keep posted on what is going on one can never be certain that one's interpretation of the facts will coincide with that of either the minority or the majority. However, we have learned from experience that the opinions of the majority are not always interpreted accurately by those in high places. It is consistently evident, and in these times more than ever, that the tastes of the many are underestimated. We get back to the old complaint that ever since music began on records, it has been the interpreter which has been sold to the public and not the music. No real thought has ever been given to selling the music to the people, particularly music which needed selling and which with a little enterprise and forethought could be made as appealing to people as the standard favorites. The removal of so much valuable material from the catalogues these days hardly seems justified; the duplication of popular material certainly does

not. It is our contention that the companies could sell, with the right kind of propaganda, a lot of musical works which in ordinary times wouldn't sell well. But maybe we're wrong. However, there seem to be many other people with similar convictions, judging from our correspondence.

A Detroit reader, Richard Klenk, thanks us for working long hours for the cause and adds—"Thanks for finally tackling those Co-Art recordings. Regarding bad surfaces on recent records . . . is it possible that you listen to records sent you only for review? Do you investigate records on sale in the shops? I am one of those who find that the surfaces vary badly; whether it is due to inferior material or over-hasty processing, I don't know. Many of the records to which the AML gives its okay prove to be miserable in respect to surface noise. Previous to the war exigencies the reviews could be relied upon to spot noisy records." From a reader in Iowa, J. W. C. Hesser, comes this: "I ran into such a bunch of poor record surfaces a while back that I practically stopped buying any domestically recorded works. Many Columbia records have an intolerable swish; I heard three different sets of one album and they all sounded the same way. I bought sight unseen Victor's set of the Horowitz Tchaikovsky concerto. It proved one of the biggest mistakes of my record buying career. It has the same faults

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as the symphony sets sold by the Chicago Tribune—crackly, noisy and static-y surfaces."

Let us contrast these with some extracts from other letters. A Boston reader, Anthony Travers, writes: "I'm glad you have written about the improvement in records of late. I found very few that were not satisfactory in every way, which leaves me with the pleasant thought that reclaimed shellac apparently is as good as new." And from Seattle, J. C. Wickes writes: "I was reluctant to buy new recordings until I read your editorial last month. Accordingly I went down town and bought six sets and only one of them had any scratchy surfaces. It's remarkable what can be done in the face of difficulties by the record companies." We could present other letters from readers in Oklahoma, Texas, Virginia, Washington, D. C., and New York in which the writers are in agreement with us.

While most of our experiences are with the review records which come in, this has not precluded our investigating records on sale in the stores. We have purchased a dozen or more sets in the past two months, some for associates and some for members of our Armed Forces, and inquiries have assured us that the recipients have not found their record surfaces bad. In several cases our statement that a recording improved with several playings was agreed with, and no one has complained of "cracky, noisy or static-y" surfaces. We can assure our readers that any flaws which we discover are reported, and that our integrity in such matters remains unassailable. We are not alone in receiving records with satisfactory surfaces. And there is no reason to believe that the companies select the best sets to send to reviewers.

Some of the defects in reproduction might be attributed to poor alignment of the pickup; for example, chatter may be due to too light a pickup (one that skates in the grooves), and some of these troubles can be traced to turntables that are warbly and uneven. Furthermore, we have heard of extraneous noises and various types of surface sounds developing in recordings which various readers have had over a period of time. Investigation has not in-

frequently revealed that the trouble was traceable to deterioration of the crystal cartridge in the pickup or to the shifting of the alignment of the mechanism of a magnetic pickup. In old-type magnetic pickups the little rubber "dampers" deteriorate and should be replaced almost yearly. Similarly the life of a crystal cartridge used extensively generally does not exceed two years, and should be replaced regularly. Motor "wows" create all sorts of disturbance in reproduction, particularly in new records. A motor should be oiled regularly, and gone over at least once a year by a reputable service man. There may be some other points to consider, and if we can place our finger on them we shall speak of them later.

* * *

An old and valued reader from Long Island writes us that the January issue was most appealing. "Your survey of Co-Art," he says, "is priceless. I wish you had read the issues of Co-Art's pamphlet called *Turntable*, in which Arthur Lange took his readers on a leisurely Cook's tour of his life to date. It would have heightened your appreciation! I gather that Mr. Lange tries—no effort to him!—to be a genial sort, but around him he has Tremblay, whom, from his pedantic expressions, I judge to be an intellectual snob [Mr. Tremblay we are informed is also a music-arranger for the movies], and Weiss, whose contempt for any opinions other than his own would seem to be mountainous. Mr. Gerstle's treatment of Scriabin is erudite, but gratifyingly succinct. The only complaint I have about the current issue is what Van Norman says about *White Christmas*. If that is all he says, one of us is nuts. I say it's tripe. It's wishy-washy. And if Crosby and Berlin dominate the American musical picture, may the gods pity our artistic prospects!"

To all of which I add that an argument on the merits of *White Christmas* might well start a civil war, so let those who disagree with Mr. Van Norman do so in friendly silence, and those who agree with him gloat over that fact in similar quiet. The music neither offends nor edifies your editor, but has rather got him trying to guess from what source material Mr.

(Continued on page 143)

The American Music Lover



A COLLECTION OF SOUNDS

JOHN K. SHERMAN

If you were hugging the fireplace on a cold winter's night, with a snowstorm raging outside, wouldn't it be pleasant to hear, for about three minutes, the chirping of birds on an early May morning near the waters of Minnetonka?

Or on a blistering summer day, with mercury nosing toward 100, what could be a more refreshing adjunct to a lime rickey than the sound of wind and rain lashing a Quebec forest?

Nature's own sounds — soothing, stimulating, elemental — are a vast repertoire of music without staves, notes and key signatures. They are an unconscious, non-human music we listen to with occasional interest, usually with varying degrees of passivity, as they come to us in their natural environment and season.

But out of their environment and season, these sounds would have a novelty and thrill because of their incongruity in the places where they were heard, and because of our power to recall them audibly at will. In a middle-western living room far from the ocean, the sound of breakers crashing the rocks of the Maine coast would be more inspiring to many than Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. In a New York apartment there'd be nostalgia and solace for the rural-bred in the subdued chatter of a Kansas farmyard, the soothing

of a sunset breeze through cottonwoods.

Collecting such sounds, captured on discs and conveyed by phonograph, would make a fascinating hobby — if there were any way of obtaining them in permanent form and making them a personal possession. You can find, of course, quite a listing of background-noise platters in the record catalogs, offering everything from the sound of a lawn-mower in operation to an "angry mob" to be used for riot scenes in radio dramas.

But these discs, intended only to furnish supplementary noises, sounds selected and recorded for their own sake, are not what I have in mind, though they are a step in the right direction and might even form the nucleus for a "collection of sounds". Nor do the achievements, interesting as they are, of anthropologists in recording native music in odd and remote corners of the world — like Dr. E. M. von Hornbostel's remarkable records of Oriental music and Laura Bolton's discs of songs of African Negroes and South-western U. S. Indian tribes — belong to the category of sounds for such a collection.

The collection I have in mind would have as much variety as a music record library, yet would be confined to sounds of nature and animals, with a sub-division

for the unplanned or planned, spontaneous or characteristic noises of the human species, group and individual.

One of the conditions I would make for such a collection would be *authenticity* of the sounds recorded. "Rush hour in Calcutta", for instance, would have to be certified on the label as being an actual sound transcript of Calcutta traffic, and not a synthetic studio job. The noise of the ice cracking up in Hudson's Bay would have to be that of genuine Hudson's Bay ice and not a spurious Lage Michigan substitute. Geographical and calendar data would have to be printed on each record.

Classification would be an interesting side-issue for one with a librarian's instincts. At the start, rough groupings into pleasant and unpleasant sounds might be sufficient. Pleasant sounds would include such obvious favorites as wind blowing through the trees, rain on the roof, the tide coming in, a crackling campfire. Under unpleasant sounds might be listed cats quarreling at midnight, the cracking of whips (one of Schopenhauer's pet sound aversions), the roar of lions.

But as the collector acquired more and more sounds and got deeper into his subject, he would have to start making distinctions. Instead of the loosely termed "wind in the trees" he would want specimens of different sounds of wind in different kinds of trees, as in (1) pines, (2) aspens, or (3) red oak. His ear would grow sharp to nuances and variations. His midnight cat fight might be fully described as a fight between a long-haired Persian and an alley cat, and the rain-on-the-roof number would be more accurately classified as a drizzle on a shingled roof, a shower on a tiled roof or a downpour on a sheet iron roof.

Geography would be important in my library of sounds.

A North Dakota blizzard probably sounds much like a Siberian blizzard, but an authenticated version of the latter would certainly have higher collectors' value. Transcription of an Antarctic gale, gained at much expense, effort and danger, would probably fetch a price most of us couldn't afford, but the zealous sound collector would crave possession of it as the

stamp collector yearns for a Cape of Good Hope "triangle".

Weather, of course, looms large in the repertoire of Nature sounds. Unfortunately, there would be some interesting aspects of it that would be valueless from the standpoint of sound effect. A fair summer day in Patagonia, for all its exotic character, would have pea-in-a-pod similarity to a 20-below-zero night in a deserted Indiana ballpark—both registering no noise at all. In each case, a recording would reveal nothing but needle-scratch.

The trick, in such cases, would be to associate time, place and meteorological conditions with their effect on indigenous and recognizable life, wild or human, in the specific locality. This would give identification. Thus, the nearby choughing of a Baltimore & Ohio switch-engine with the peculiarly crisp, sharp quality it has on a sub-zero night would lend descriptive atmosphere to your sound-picture of a deserted Indiana ballpark. And a few desultory bird-calls would give substance and identity to your recording of the Patagonian pampas.

Weather effects are produced by precipitation and wind, in various stages of agitation. They run a wide gamut. At one extreme would be a Florida east coast hurricane, at the other would be an idle July breeze flicking the stalks in an Iowa cornfield. In playing such records, you would pick the one that accords with your mood.

Sounds peculiar to certain localities would doubtless be most popular, for most of them carry a reminiscent or exotic message to those far removed from the localities. Maritime and harbor noises would have particular fascination for inlanders—the bleating of fog-horns, the screams of gulls as they wheel and soar over rocky headlands, the deep-throated bonks of ocean liners, the watery medley of sounds in busy New York harbor.

Think of the fascination of having the cacophony of an Amazonian jungle reproduced in your living room, or the creak of the water-wheels along the river Nile, or the piping of a Rumanian shepherd and the bleating of his sheep.

There are difficulties, of course, in the

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matter of localized noises in relation to geography and various types of terrain. The sea has a vast variety of sounds, but mountains, for example, are pretty quiet. About the only mountain noises you could record would be that wonderful lullaby the wind sings as it susurrates through the pines, or the calls of mountain birds, or such things as the roar of Yellowstone falls. A thunderstorm in the mountains has a character of its own, far different from a thunderstorm on the plains.

Man-made noises are in a class by themselves, and of course the war has unleashed a new and frightening array of them. These would be historical noises, to be catalogued roughly with President Roosevelt's and Winston Churchill's recent addresses to Congress already recorded. In post-war years, it will be a grimly instructive reminder to hear again the catastrophic din of a London air raid, and there might be considerable interest in a collection of air raid "alerts" and "all clears" as recorded in various European capitals, and mayhap in American cities.

But aside from history and the war, there are many divisions of human noise that might prove of value to the collector. What is the difference, for example, between newsboys' cries in Boston and newsboys' cries in New Orleans? Hash-house language must differ widely in Montana and, say, Georgia. We'd like to hear the haggling in a Morocco bazaar and compare it with the same kind of jabbering in Bombay. You could make a large collection of sounds of leavetaking as recorded in railway stations, complete to the conductor's "Board!" Some of the sounds of which I speak might be easily obtained from newsreels and other movies, but their authenticity would have to be assured to the collector.

A collection of sounds has virtually unlimited possibilities. Americans have collected far sillier things, and spent much money on them. The time may come when many of us, in search of our sound "photographs", will be able to register them as easily as we now take snapshots on vacations.

BOOK REVIEWS

THE MUSIC GOES ROUND, by F. W. Gaisberg. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1942. 273 pp., \$3.00.

▲ One of the chapters in this book is entitled "The Procession Passes". It would have been an apt title for the entire book, for within its covers stalk dozens of the great and near-great in the interpretative field. And a more colorful lot cannot be imagined. Mr. Gaisberg's life was full of incident and achievement, and many there must be who will envy him this fullness.

The author has been well known in the gramophone world for fifty years. In his youth he was an assistant to Emile Berliner, the inventor of the disc record; and

his early experiences as recording director for the company which later was to be known as the Victor Talking Machine Company make interesting reading. In 1898 Berliner sent him to Europe as a sort of envoy extraordinary, for the purpose of convincing celebrated singers that the "talking machine" was no longer a toy, but a worthy means of perpetuating their voices. Although his path was a thorny one, his persuasive powers were such that within five years he had built up a formidable catalogue of Red Seal Records, which, even though they emitted sounds that were in most cases a mere wraith of the original, earned considerable

sums for both the artists and the Company.

The early chapters of the book deal rather sketchily with the birth of the gramophone and its lateral-cut records (in contra-distinction to the hill-and-dale phonograph records of Edison), and the rivalry between the advocates of the two methods of recording, and also between the various companies, often involving patent litigation. The radical changes brought about by the introduction of electrical recording in 1926 are touched upon in the course of the narrative.

The remaining chapters are concerned with personalities. Interesting sidelights on many of their foibles are revealed. Those graybeards whose gramophonic memories go back to the first decade of the century will shed a retrospective tear at the mere mention of the names of the artists whose records were best-sellers in the "popular" field and a delight to old and young. A side-splitting vignette of an incident in St. Petersburg, another one in Moscow, the earliest Wagner recordings, the Glyndebourne Festivals, the Vienna Philharmonic on the eve of the Anschluss, the trips to the Far East — these are a mere handful on the incidents touched upon in this chatty book. All the well-known Victor artists make their bows, as well as some of those who are associated with the competitive Columbia Company. Even musicians not closely connected with the gramophone, such as Bruckner, Nikisch, Busoni and Vaughan Williams, have their moment in the spot-light. A chapter is devoted to Elgar and Delius, not by any means the least interesting section of the book. The author recognizes the splendid spade-work done by Compton Mackenzie, the novelist, in the early Twenties, when the gramophone was beginning to emerge from the "expensive toy" category.

All this makes extremely interesting reading, even to those not particularly in close touch with recorded music. It is unfortunate that the author's lack of literary style and his looseness of construction hamper the reader. Here is a case where the employment of a ghost-writer would have been justifiable.

A word must be added concerning the photographs scattered through the text.

Some are amusing, and all are worth more than a glance. They remain not the least of the book's many attractions.

—Henry S. Gerstlé

THIS MODERN MUSIC. By John Tasker Howard. Thomas Y. Crowell Co. New York, N. Y. 234 pp. Price \$2.50.

▲ This book is sub-titled *A Guide for the Bewildered Listener*. In the beginning Mr. Howard tells us how famous composers of the past were resisted by the conservatives and reactionaries of their times; how many were regarded as radicals. All innovators in art have been regarded in their time as moderns, and the term modern music was as applicable to the music of Monteverdi and Beethoven in their day as it is to the products of our own modernists. Tracing music in a more or less cursory manner, the author explains the various changes in musical style and speech—thus we find chapters devoted to dissonance, atonality, polytonality, impressionism, quarter-tones and even jazz. Most of this has been accomplished in a general way undoubtedly designed for popular consumption. The book is filled with clichés which should have been avoided.

The idea that after reading a book of this kind the listener can expect to relax while listening to such modern music as has troubled him previously is preposterous. Mr. Howard's explanations of musical notation and style are stereotyped, they merely skim the surface, and consequently what he has to say can prove as disconcerting to some as it may prove helpful to others. The book offers no original research, or constructive thoughts that have not already appeared in similar books (of which there are far too many for the music lover's good), and moreover the author has repeated himself almost verbatim from earlier books, without taking the trouble to alter or significantly add to his material.

Having found the author's previous books, *Our American Music* and *Our Contemporary Composers*, admirable, particularly for reference, we approached the

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A SURVEY OF RECORDED

OPERA ARIAS

PETER HUGH REED

Part II

There are three types of soprano voices: the dramatic, the lyric and the coloratura. Dramatic sopranos have been the most versatile, for some of them have not only essayed essentially dramatic roles but have also sung successfully lyric and coloratura roles. Some of the most satisfying renditions of great coloratura roles have been memorably projected by dramatic voices. One thinks immediately of Lilli Lehmann, who could sing with equal success Isolde, Norma and any of the lyric as well as dramatic roles in Mozart's operas. "The class of voice is dependent upon the in-born characteristics of the vocal organs," this singer has said. "But the development of the voice and all else that appertains to the art of song can, providing talent is not lacking, be learned through industry and energy." I never heard this singer in public, but I did hear her in her studio, since I took lessons from her for a short time. Her vocal versatility even late in life was remarkable. The development of the voice is frequently surprising. My friend Florence Easton is an example. She began as a lyric soprano, and the first time I heard her the voice was light and incapable of any dramatic energy. This was prior to World War I. Easton's physical stamina permitted her to develop into a dramatic artist, and few who heard her sing Isolde in the early 1920s at the Metropolitan will deny that her voice was equal to all the demands that the music makes on a singer. Again, this versatile

artist was equally as convincing in the role of Marguerite in Gounod's *Faust*.

There are really no arias recorded by noted sopranos from operas prior to Handel. We find recordings of ariettas and songs by the early Italian composers, but no opera airs. However, most of the operas written by Monteverdi and his contemporaries do not have parts written for high female voices, and though it is undoubtedly true that sopranos of Monteverdi's time sang the chief roles in such operas, in modern times we generally hear such arias as have come down to us rendered by an alto or mezzo soprano. It has always been a source of regret to me that no dramatic soprano has never recorded the aria *Abi, troppo è duro* from Monteverdi's *Il Balletto dell Ingrate*, which Pietro Floridia has excellently transcribed. I am in complete agreement with him that the dramatic intensity of this air has no parallel in the music of its time, and that it even excels the famous *Arianna's Lament*.

Although many of the great sopranos of the past sang arias from Handel's operas, few recorded any. More arias from the composer's oratorios were waxed than from his operas. Although Handel's opera *Atalanta* (1736) contains an important tenor part, the opera is best remembered today through the soprano air *Care Selve*. This is a beautifully suave and sustained song, one of the severest tests a composer ever set a singer. The poem to which the air is set is only two lines in length

and is concerned with the friendly shade of a beloved wood or grove. The English translation is not only vacuous but misrepresentative. Alma Gluck made a fine recording of this song in her prime, unfortunately using the English words (Victor disc 6147 or 74504). Guck studied this air as well as the lovely *O, Sleep! Why dost thou leave me* from *Semele* with Marcella Sembrich, and her renditions are appreciable not only for their vocal beauty but also for their style. However, I agree fully with Philip Miller, who in his review of Noréna's record of *Care Selve* (Victor disc 15182—February, 1939) said that this singer contributes with her rarified art the first satisfactory recording of this selection. So, this is the first of our recommended soprano recordings. Noréna possesses one of the loveliest lyric voices of our time.

One of the greatest dramatic sopranos of all times, Emma Albani (1852-1930), made in 1904 a recording of *Angels ever bright and fair* from Handel's oratorio *Theodora* (1749), which the enterprising International Record Collectors' Club repressed in 1935. It is a valued disc among collectors and deserves mention here.

Handel a la Pons

Recently, Lily Pons, the popular coloratura soprano, recorded for Victor (disc 2151) two lyric operatic arias by Handel—*Lusinghe Più care* from *Allessandro* (1726) and *Alma mia* from *Floridante* (1721). As Mr. Miller said when reviewing these in April, 1941, Miss Pons sings them with charm.

From one of Handel's most successful opera, *Giulio Cesare*, Hélène Cals, a soprano whose origin is unknown to me, sings in Italian the air of Cleopatra from Act III—I *mut weep* (Decca 25359 or Parlophone E11195). The lady has a good voice and although the accompaniment is not all we might like it to be (organ, piano, violin and cello), the music is well worth investigating and knowing. On the reverse face of the record, Miss Cals sings the lovely aria *Vidit suum* from Pergolesi's moving *Stabat Mater*.

Elisabeth Rethberg back in 1926 made a recording (Brunswick 30119) of the aria *Rendi l'sereno al ciglio* (*Smooth thy*

troubled brow) from Handel's opera *Sosarme* (1732). Although not representative of this soprano's most distinguished work on records, the disc is still valued by many of her admirers. It is an early electrical recording.

André Marillier, a French lyric soprano, recorded about ten years ago Polissena's air *Ombre cara* from Handel's opera *Radamisto* (1720) (French Columbia disc RF-25). This record, which was never repressed in this country, is perhaps of more value from a historical standpoint than from an artistic one. On the reverse face, there is an aria from Grétry's *Richard Coeur-de-Lion* (1784).

Lully Recordings

About the only important operatic composer of the 17th century of whom we have soprano aria recordings is Lully (1639-1687). The French soprano Solange Renaux has recorded the dramatic air of *Méropé, O mort!* from *Persée* (1682) and the more lyrical aria of Logistille, *Par le secours*, from *Roland* (1685). Though the soprano's diction is none too clear, her singing is pleasing. Originally released by Pathé in Paris about 1936, this disc was re-pressed by domestic Columbia in February, 1939 (Pathé disc PGT 21—Columbia 9154-M).

Mlle. Jean Laval, soprano of the Paris Opéra, recorded for French Columbia (disc LF 18) around 1935 the aria of Venus—*Revenez, amours, revenez*—from Lully's *Tbésée* (1675). The singer's voice, which is typically French, is heard at its best on records in this air; her diction is particularly appreciable. The value of this disc is historically enhanced by the inclusion of the aria *Tristes Apprêts* from Rameau's opera *Castor et Pollux*, although Mlle. Laval (unrelated as far as I know to the French Quisling) does not render this air as well, being inclined to too much portamento for my liking. However, the music of Rameau is an interesting example of his operatic style.

Rameau, of course, belonged to the period of Handel, which was the first half of the 18th century. One should not pass by Rameau without mentioning one of the loveliest recordings made by the late Alma Gluck—the air *Rossignols amour-*

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aux (Victor disc 74249). As far as I know this air is not from an opera, but it is representative of the operatic style of Rameau, and remains one of the French composer's most beautiful soprano airs. The Gluck disc did not remain in the Victor catalog too long, and hence has become a cherished collectors' item.

Two of the greatest operatic composers of all times, Gluck (1714-1787) and Mozart (1756-1791), have always offered fertile field for great singers. Gluck is regarded as the great reformer of opera; he clung to the old classical subjects and sought to advance poetry and dramatic truth, partly by shunning the vocal display that was highly regarded by the fashionable audiences of his time. Mozart, over forty years Gluck's junior, knew the value of the Italian school, which he expanded upon, bringing to his music not only a high degree of melodic charm, but subtler harmony, and more effective orchestration. Mozart's greatest gift as an operatic composer was his ability to portray musically the characters in his operas.

A Cherished Memory

One of my cherished memories of a Gluck opera is a performance of *Armide* with Fremstad and Caruso, and it has always been a matter for regret that neither of these splendid artists ever recorded arias from these operas. However, that richly gifted soprano, Frieda Leider (whose singing always appealed to me more than did Flagstad's), recorded *Armide's* aria, *Ab! si la liberté me doit être ravie* (H.M.V. DB-1547). This is a disc I have always valued, and it is one that I recommend to any interested reader. On the reverse face Leider sings Donna Anna's famous Vengeance Aria, *Or sai chi l'onore*, from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

Gluck has not fared too auspiciously on records, particularly as far as the soprano is concerned. *Orfeo* has been the one Gluck opera which has been consistently repeated in our opera houses. Outside of *Armide*, which was only given two seasons at the Metropolitan, *Iphigénie en Tauride* was the only other opera heard there until the recent revival of *Alceste*. Both of these latter operas offer magnificent roles for the soprano. Since Gluck's *Orfeo* belongs

to the contralto, comments upon recorded arias from this opera will come later.

Rose Bampton, who shared the role of *Alceste* at the Metropolitan with Marjorie Lawrence, has recorded two of *Alceste's* airs — *Non, ce n'est point un sacrifice* (Act I) and *Ab, Malgré moi* (Act II) (Victor disc 18218). Miss Bampton is always an admirable musician, and stylistically her interpretations are creditable, but there are some indications that Gluck's sustained music places a strain on her voice. Nevertheless, her singing of the better part of *Ab, malgré moi* is movingly contrived. The aria *Divinités du Styx* (Act I), *Alceste's* curse upon the gods of the lower world, has been opulently sung by Helen Traubel (Victor 17268), but neither the singer nor the conductor is stylistically unerring. This is a show piece, written in the grand manner, and requires a more reserved artistry than most singers give it. One can imagine what an artist like Lilli Lehmann would have done with this aria in her prime. Suzanne Balguérie, a French soprano highly esteemed in Paris for her Gluck singing, renders this aria with dignity and nobility (Eng. Decca LY6065), and on the reverse face of the record sings a lovely lyric air — *O malheureuse Iphigénie* — from *Iphigénie en Tauride*. I also possess a record (French Columbia LF54) by this soprano of *Alceste's* air, *Bannis la crainte*, which I greatly prefer to Miss Bampton's.

Vocal Nuance

Beautifully sung is the tenor air, *O del mio dolce ardor* from *Paride ed Elena*, by Hedwig von Deicka (Polydor 66924); and that inimitable artist, Claudia Muzio, whose gift for vocal nuance was veritably unmatched during her existence, recorded the lovely air *Spiagge amate* from the same opera (this has been re-recorded from an old Pathe disc by IRCC — No. 192). I commend this last disc to the attention of all admirers of fine singing.

Among some records that I picked up in Europe in the early 'twenties is one of *Iphigénie's* air, *O du, die mir einst Hilfe gab*, from *Iphigénie auf Tauris*, sung by Zinaida Jurjevskaja (Parlophon disc). This singer possessed a lovely lyrical soprano, incredibly free in its production. She sang with success in opera in Germany, but un-

happy over the Revolution in her native Russia and the fate of her family she committed suicide in the late 'twenties by leaping into a crevice in a glacier in Switzerland. The world assuredly lost a gifted vocalist in her death.

In recommending recordings of Mozart arias I shall confine myself to personal favorites. This field is so rich and varied that one could easily write several articles about it. Most opera-goers have memories of particular performances of Mozart's operas. How strangely true is the assertion often made that one seldom if ever hears the perfect performance of a Mozart opera. Its truth is borne home by the complete recordings of the several operas emanating from the Glyndebourne Festival Co. So inimitably has Mozart treated every character, that one feels that a great singer is needed for each part to do justice to it. But this is impossible; and so we content ourselves with lesser voices in lesser parts and hope for gifted ones in the major roles.

Così fan tutte

To take Mozart's operas in alphabetical order, we begin with that deliciously gay and effervescent comedy *Così fan tutte* (1790), written a year before the composer's untimely death. Of all the Glyndebourne sets, this one is the most completely satisfying. Although the opera is preferable sung in Italian, there are several selections sung in German which remain highly gratifying. The accomplished Czech soprano, Felicie Hüni-Mihacsek, has given the most notable performance of Fiordiligi's difficult aria, *Per pietà, ben mio*, complete with recitative (Polydor 66613—Brunswick 90203). The original singer of this part apparently had unusual accomplishments, for Mozart here wrote one of his most difficult arias for the soprano voice, an aria of wide range and sudden skips. The lyric-voiced Lotte Schoene recorded in German Despina's air, *Un donna a quindici anni*, with *Ach, ich fühl's* from *Die Zauberflöte* on the reverse face (Victor 7112—withdrawn). The desirability of this record makes its withdrawal incomprehensible. Lina Pagliughi has given an appreciable rendition of Fiordiligi's first act aria, *Come scoglio* (Decca 29018), although the lightness of her voice is not

consistent with Mozart's writing for this character.

Don Giovanni (1787) has been commendably performed by the Glyndebourne company, but this opera so insistently demands great singing that one turns to other recordings of its various arias. That exquisitely phrased duet, *Là ci darem la mano*, was excellently sung by Farrar and Scotti (Victor 8023); it is a record that collectors may justly cherish. A recent record by Rethberg and Pinza (Victor 2154) unhappily does not reveal the lady at her best, suggesting a Zerlina that is not the youthful person the Don is supposed to woo. The singing of this duet in the Glyndebourne set is disappointing, the tempo being far too slow; and so, if one wants a well sung modern recording, one has to turn to the German version made by Erna Berger and Heinrich Schlusnus (Eng. Decca-Polydor DE 7070; on the reverse face of this record is a pleasing version of the *Letter Duet*, also sung in German, from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, by Viorica Ursuleac and Miss Berger).

Donna Anna's Arias

Donna Anna's imposing aria of vengeance, *Or sai chi l'onore*, has already been spoken of as sung by Frieda Leider. Margarete Baumer, the German soprano who came to this country with the Wagnerian Opera Co. in the 'twenties and who at one time was announced to join the Metropolitan roster, has also recorded this air (in German) with the preceding recitative between Donna Anna and Octavio (Decca 20069). The singer's naturally opulent voice is heard at its best in this recording. One of the regrets of all admirers of Rosa Ponselle is the fact that she never recorded any of the music of Donna Anna, despite the fact that some critics believe she was miscast in the part. Her *Non mi dir* was exquisitely sung and should have been waxed for posterity.

Both Elisabeth Schumann and Elisabeth Rethberg have recorded Zerlina's *Batti, batti bel Masetto*. Although Rethberg's is beautifully sung, I find the artfulness of the character better portrayed by Schumann (Victor 7076); the reverse face of the Schumann disc has a charmingly sung *Voi che sapete* from *Figaro*. Bori's *Batti, batti*

(Victor 14614) has charm and style, but the voice no longer owns its youthful élan. Bori is far more successful in her rendition of *Vedrai, carino* (Victor 1846), but Schumann's version of this air is more sweetly sung (Victor 1454). Farrar was in lovely voice when she sang her *Batti, batti*, but her tempo is too much on the slow side. An acoustic recording of this aria by the lovely Viennese soprano Selma Kurz, which I acquired in Europe some years ago, remains one of my cherished discs.

The superb Hüni-Mihacsek made an unsurpassable recording of Donna Elvira's *Miradi quel' alma ingrata*, an aria which is more often than not omitted in the opera house (Polydor 66614 or Brunswick 90-112). On the reverse face this gifted soprano gives an equally telling version of Donna Anna's *Non mi dir*. Both arias were also recorded on an H.M.V. disc (D-1119) by the English soprano Evelyn Scotney, who sang at the Metropolitan Opera for several seasons beginning in 1919. Scotney possessed a lovely tonal quality, and her singing of these airs reveals her voice at its best.

The Escape from the Harem

Die Entführung aus dem Serail (1782) has found more popularity in European opera houses than in this country. Except for a very fine performance given by the American Opera Company in 1927, I have never heard a professional one of this opera. *Die Entführung* is not much of a play, but it not wanting in great music, and certainly the two ladies in the cast—Constanze and Blonde—have many attractive arias. The first of Constanze's arias is the superb dramatic coloratura one—*Ach, ich liebe*. The great Lilli Lehmann has left us a record of this aria, which is remarkable considering that she was well past her prime when she sang it. Marguerita Perras, the Greek soprano, who sang with notable success in Germany during the past decade, has a record of this aria with Constanze's other famous aria *Marten aller Arten* on the reverse face (Victor 12007). Her singing is most impressive. Both arias are fiendishly difficult, and Perras tosses them off in a competent manner. But for genuinely thrilling sing-

ing of the *Marten aller Arten*, I still turn to the recording made by Huni-Mihacsek (Polydor 66758 or Brunswick 90139). Lily Pons' recent recording of *Ach, ich liebe* finds the singer out of her element and cannot be recommended. On the other hand, Miss Pons' recording of Blonde's scherzando, *Welche Wonne, welche Lust* (Columbia disc 17347-D), is charmingly sung, as is also her rendition of Blonde's earlier aria *Durch Zaerlichkeit und Schmeicheln* (Victor disc 2110), though neither air is benefited by the French language. Indeed, I find most Mozartean arias quite unattractive in the French tongue.

From Mozart's opera *Idomeneo, re di Creta* (1781), Vera Schwartz, the German soprano, has given us an attractive air—*Sanfte Winde* (Decca D-20361). Although the soprano sings well, she unfortunately has to cope with a surface noise in my disc which she could never have contracted for at the time of recording.

The next of the operas written by the mature Mozart is *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786), one of the most delightful musical entertainments ever created. One should be grateful for the Glyndebourne performance of this work on records, but I can understand those who wish that it had been better sung. Mr. Miller once made for us an analysis of this opera on records (January, 1939, issue), and for a more complete discussion of independent recordings, I refer the reader to his article. Cherubino's flustery *Non so più* is our first aria under discussion here; one can obtain no better rendition of it than that made by Elisabeth Schumann (Victor 1431), whose infectious sense of rhythm is not equalled by Risé Stevens (Columbia 17298-D).

The Countess' Arias

Mr. Miller regards as the most interesting of the various recordings of the Countess' cavatina, *Porgi amor*, the acoustic version by Lilli Lehmann, which I do not own. Of all the old recordings, Mr. Miller's preference for the Gadske disc (Victor 88275) is understandable; this is indeed beautifully sung. Both Rethberg and Lotte Lehmann have recorded this aria in German; though one agrees with Mr. Miller that Rethberg gives an admirably polished performance,

my preference for Lehmann's recording despite some stylistic flaws is occasioned by the fact that this singer by virtue of her sensuous warmth of tone makes the Countess' sorrow more touching (Rethberg — Decca D-20047; Lehmann — Decca D-25817). Rethberg's recent Victor disc 2155, sung in Italian, offers but a shadow of her former artistry. I have already spoken of Schumann's recording of *Voi che sapete*; it is quite satisfying. Mr. Miller's admiration of Melba's version of this air is not shared by everyone; it is, however, one of this singer's most successful records. There is much to be said for Cherubino being sung by a mezzo soprano voice, particularly if the singer conveys the boyish qualities that Risé Stenvens does. Her *Voi che sapete* (reverse side of her *Non so più*) is sung with rare suavity, but at a faster pace than most sing it.

Susanna's gay *Venite inginocchiatevi* has been charmingly sung by Schumann (Victor 1431). And the lovely duet between Susanna and the Count was never sung better than by Farrar and Scotti (Victor 8039). There is no electrical recording of distinction of this duet outside of the one in the Glyndebourne set. Quite unmatched for beauty of tone is the late Meta Seinemeyer's rendition of the Countess' aria *Dove sono*, although the recording is on the weak side (Decca D-25071). Tiana Lemnitz's singing of this air and of *Porgi amor* (Victor 15178) are disappointing; one feels the lady had an off-day when she made both recordings.

I do not share Mr. Miller's admiration for the Sembrich-Eames performance of the *Letter Duet*; it is one of the recordings by my friend Emma Eames which I find disappointing, both her voice and Sembrich's sound constricted. The recording of the duet by Ursuleac and Berger is recommended to those who want an electric one.

Hempel's "Deh vieni"

Mr. Miller thinks that Frieda Hempel's record (Victor 88450) of Susanna's exquisite expression of ardent longing, *Deh vieni non tardar*, is the best of all. Quite irresistible, particularly in her delivery of the recitative, is Bori's acoustic version (Victor 6049). Bori uses a version of this air made popular by Patti with added high

notes. The former singer's electric version of *Deh vieni* (Victor 14614) does not compare with her older one. Another record I like is the one made by Lotte Lehmann (Decca D-20279), although I agree with Mr. Miller that the aria suffers when translated into German. Unquestionably, the best electric version is sung by Bidu Sayao (Victor 18496).

Mozart's opera *Il Re pastore* (1775), really a dramatic festival play set to music, is best remembered for the exquisite soprano aria, *L'amerò, sarò costante*. One returns to Melba's acoustic record for the perfect performance of this air; the beauty of her voice is a joy throughout. The French soprano Gabrielle Ritter-Ciampi made a lovely electric recording (Polydor 66841 or Brunswick 90043). Elisabeth Rethberg's version (Victor 7472) is marred by her manner of singing the coloratura cadenza, which lacks the limpid beauty of tone of Ciampi and Melba.

It remains to speak of Mozart's greatest opera, *Die Zauberflöte* (1791), completed the year of his death. I think this remains the most satisfactory of all the Mozart opera sets; the singing throughout is on a high plane and almost every member of the cast does justice to his or her part. Frieda Hempel's recordings of the two arias of the Queen of the Night (H.M.V. DB331 and DB365) are justly valued collectors' items; both vocally and stylistically this singer is all one could ask. And one of Meliza Korjus' best records is her version of the *Vengeance Aria* (Victor 11921). The Lily Pons version, on the other hand, is quite unconvincing. I have already mentioned Lotte Schoene's rendition of Pamina's *Ach, ich fühl's*. The Negro soprano, Dorothy Maynor, has also recorded this air (Victor 15826), but although her singing is distinguished for sweetness and limpidity of tone, her understanding of the aria is not persuasive. Lotte Lehmann's version (reverse of her *Deh vieni*) is sung with feeling, but not with the vocal finish one would like. Mr. Miller recalls an old recording (made in the 'twenties) by Rethberg, which he favors, but for records of the older singers I still cherish those made by Destinn and Gadschi.

(To be continued)



RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

It is the purpose of this department to review monthly all worthwhile recordings. If at any time we happen to omit a record in which the readers is particularly interested, we shall be glad to give our opinion of the recording on written request. Correspondents are requested to enclose self-addressed stamped envelopes.

We believe that record buyers would do well to order by title rather than by number such items as they may wish to purchase. Numbers are sometimes printed incorrectly in our sources.

All prices given are without tax.

Orchestra

DEBUSSY: *La Mer—Trois esquisses symphoniques*; played by the Cleveland Orchestra, direction of Artur Rodzinski. Columbia set M or MM-531, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ One could hardly call Rodzinski's performance of this score an evocative achievement. It is not that it lacks sensitivity or polish, but that others have given us more imaginative performances. There is something of the quality of a mezzotint to Rodzinski's reading, particularly in the first half of the score, or a Corot painting, while the Koussevitzky performance has the brilliance and vivid

coloring of a Cezanne or a Gauguin. Neither conductor, in my estimation, achieves the miraculous effects that Toscanini does in his performance—the realization of elusive and mysterious overtones as well as the suggestion of the beauty and ruthlessness of the sea. One does not think specifically of any one painter when Toscanini plays this work. Instead one thinks, as the late Lawrence Gilman has said, "of a sea unknown to mariners or airmen: a sea of strange visions and stranger voices, of fantastic colors and incalculable winds, at times full of bodement and terror, at times sunlit and dazzling; it is a spectacle perceived as in a trance . . ."

Rodzinski is far too much of the realist in this score, to my way of thinking; he clarifies it in a manner that does justice to its plastic proportions but not to its poetic essence. The opening movement, *From dawn till noon on the sea*, does not fully suggest the changing aspects of the picture, and the second movement, *Sport of the waves*, has too much of a cinematic effect. The playing of the orchestra is splendid throughout; the conductor's is eminently musicianly and adroit, but the straightforwardness of his disclosure of the music leaves much to be desired from the esthetic standpoint. There is more atmosphere in his performance of the finale, *Dialogue of the wind and the sea*,

but here again the coloring and the passion of the music is not as exciting as in the Koussevitzky version.

As a recording this set is far better contrived than the Boston Symphony album; there is an over-all evenness of tone and no evidence at any time on the turn of record that the recording technique was altered or stepped up as in the Koussevitzky. A first playing did not reveal the reproduction at its best, but subsequent use of a chromium needle opened the groovers to more satisfactory reproduction.

— P. H. R.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 1 in E minor, Opus 39*; played by the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, direction of John Barbirolli. Columbia set M or MM-532, five discs, price \$5.50.

▲ This month we have new recordings of Sibelius' youthful symphony and of his most mature. The former has become a standard work in the symphonic repertoire while the latter has yet to establish its popularity. Despite the fact that some critics contend that the earlier work is crudely put together and does not wear as well as some of his later works, it cannot be denied that the greater percentage of the concert-going public likes it. It has become the fashion among a great many musicians as well as music lovers of our time to disparage Sibelius. Curiously, many of the modern composers who disparage Sibelius owe him much more than they are willing to concede.

This is one of the finest recordings that Columbia has accomplished with the Philharmonic-Symphony, and decidedly one of the most persuasive performances that Barbirolli has done for the phonograph. His previous performance of the *Second Symphony* was disappointing; it lacked the unity of purpose evidenced here. In the concert hall Barbirolli has built up a reputation for his interpretations of both works, but only in this one on records does he sustain the distinction attained. From beginning to end of this work, it is quite evident that the conductor's imagination is wide awake and that he is

conducting with considerable care, but never with the kind of solicitude that denies meaning or elevation.

Ormandy's second recording of this work, made with the Philadelphia Orchestra (see issue of April, 1942), has much to commend it, but he pursues a more straightforward musical course than Barbirolli and there is little of the latter's youthful elation and fervor. One admires Ormandy's reading, particularly in comparison with his earlier Minneapolis Symphony version, for its evidences of a better rounded and more mature conception of the score. But there is not the stimulation in his reading that one finds in Barbirolli's. There are two schools of thought on the interpretation of Sibelius, the one that does not admit any ardor of temperament in his music and the other which contends that this quality is strongly evidenced in his early symphonies. The truth of the matter is, as one of Sibelius' disciples (De Toerne) has told us, that there is no exaltation in Sibelius of the Tchaikovskian type, but there is nevertheless an occasional feeling of triumph and joy, albeit "much more virile, heroic and organically connected with the rest of the work." The first and second symphonies have their sombre sides, but these are by no means predominating.

I have already praised the recording, which is not only unusually clear and clean but in the set I heard particularly gratifying since it required no second or third playing to clarify it. And, furthermore, the surfaces were superior to those of my Victor set. From the opening measures, where the richly plangent tones of Mr. Bellison's clarinet are heard, it is evident that the reproduction of tone-color has been unusually well handled. And though there is not the same lustrous quality of string tone one finds in the Philadelphia set, the individual instrumental qualities are nonetheless well sustained. It seems a pity that Columbia could not have realized this work on four discs as Victor did in the case of the last Ormandy set, for in these days the expense of an extra record is something to think about.

— P. H. R.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 7 in C major, Opus 105*; played by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, direction of Vladimir Golschmann. Victor set DM-922, three disc, price \$3.50.

▲ Associations with music are apt to preclude the possibility of objective appraisal, when, for example, the repetition of a certain work recalls a pleasant experience shared by two people which brought about a mutual understanding. Sibelius' *Seventh* occupies a unique niche in this writer's memory, for it was through an early performance that a friend and I discovered much that we had in common in music as well as other things.

Leaving out personal associations where this score is concerned, I find that this music throughout does not engage my attention quite as consistently as do some of the other Sibelius symphonies. The best part of the score, in my estimation, is to be found in the opening third—the music embodied in the first two record faces and part of the third (about to section H in the printed score). Thereafter the compactness of the composer's thought gives way and the music loosens up rather disconcertingly. With side 4 (Koussevitzky) the thematic material takes on a muscular energy, and the music pursues a familiar Sibelius up-and-down-hill pattern. Then follow long lines of rushing strings over which motives are developed in the brasses. The songful theme (end of side 4—Koussevitzky and beginning of side 5—Golschmann) is a long way from the brooding and seemingly inaccessible thought of the opening. Tovey says this song "would add naiveté to the most innocent shanties of the human sailors in Wagner's *Flying Dutchman*." To my way of thinking this songful material transplants us suddenly from the rugged terrain of Finland to the north of Italy; there is a decided Tuscan air about it and on first acquaintance one may question its propriety in the score. However, the skillful manner in which the composer handles this material cannot be refuted. Cecil Gray, in his book on the Sibelius symphonies, divides this work into sections, and labels this part as gay and scherzo-like. One can agree with Gray that "particularly remark-

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able is the way in which these and other thematic fragments are here varied, developed, and juxtaposed." The last phase of the symphony begins with side 6 (Golschmann); here we have a climactic finale, employing brasses boldly and brilliantly, which recalls the style of the finale of the *Fifth Symphony*. The work comes to a tranquil close, however, one which Tovey contents is of noble pathos. Once one becomes familiar with the style of the score, its thematic material and the manner in which Sibelius develops that material, one may find oneself agreeing that the work holds interest despite the varied quality of its thematic substance. It should be remembered that the symphony is evolved, as Gray says, from the interaction of many melodic germs.

The so-called "subtle simplicities" of Sibelius' musical texture, as well as the inaccessibility that has been called characteristic of his thought, are definitely hallmarks of this score. Even Tovey admits that "an adequate analysis of this noble work would be too subtle to be readable," but he also definitely feels that its construction can be comprehended by the listener—any analysis he might make "would probably find its points more evident in the music than in any words."

The Koussevitzky performance, recorded in England from a broadcast, dates back a half-dozen years or more; the quality of the recording suggests the microphone technique of the 1935 period. As an interpretation, this performance is more forceful and intense than Golschmann's. But there are definite qualities to this new recording, which, in my estimation, make it appreciable. Koussevitzky stresses the brasses more strongly than Golschmann; the later is more mellow in his whole shaping of the score. Moreover, the superb quality of the strings in this new recording makes it especially appealing. Victor has given Golschmann a richly realistic reproduction of his orchestra, a reproduction which will appeal tremendously to many. There is no denying the stronger and more fervently dramatic treatment of the score by Koussevitzky, but the recording of his performance leaves much to be desired. Whether those who own the Koussevitzky set would wish to give it up for the new one remains something only they can decide. Long familiarity with the Koussevitzky reading leaves me partial towards it, but it does not prevent me from realizing that Golschmann has given a thoroughly musicianly if not as appreciably balanced an account of the score. And the splendid recording with its lustrous string quality does merit our applause.

—P. H. R.

SMETANA: *The Moldau* (No. 2 of the Symphonic Cycle—*My Country*); played by the National Symphony Orchestra, direction of Hans Kindler. Victor set DM-921, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ It is difficult to understand why Victor thought it necessary to duplicate this work, when it already had the fine set made by

Kubelik and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (No. 523). Moreover, the previous set is better played and divided, occupying as it does three record faces instead of the four used here, and for only another dollar the listener acquires the lovely pastoral music of *From Bohemia's Fields and Meadows*. Undoubtedly the present set is more opulently recorded, but this in itself does not compensate for the thickness and lack of fluidity which is apparent in Kindler's performance. Despite the fact that the Walter performance of last year is less clearly recorded and does not offer the same precision of playing (there are several instances where the percussion is not quite on the beat), Walter's interpretation reveals a happier understanding of the score. Furthermore, the Walter set is on three sides. When all is said and done, however, the Kubelik set, even though it dates from 1938, remains the best buy all around, for it offers two of Smetana's tone poems, and despite the deserved popularity of *The Moldau*, there is much to be said for the other work.

The six symphonic poems that "the incorrigible patriot and ardent nationalist," Smetana, wrote to glorify his country are not all of the quality of *The Moldau* or *From Bohemian Fields and Meadows*. The first, named after a famous and historic Bohemian citadel at Prague, *Vysehrad* , which can best be described as an evocation of Bohemia's past, owns some majestic pages, but not the sustained interest of the more lyrical poems cited above. The third, *Sarka*, named for "the noblest of the Bohemian Amazons," is a drama of love and revenge. This is dramatic music bordering on the theatrical; again there are effective pages but the whole tone poem does not wear well in reproduction, although it can be said it scores with an audience in concert. The fifth, *Tabor*, named after the fortress of the Hussites so closely associated with Bohemia's struggles for religious and political freedom, is largely based on the old Hussite chorale *All ye who are warriors of God*. This tone poem, in my estimation, is the strongest and most enduring of the four dramatic pieces; it deserves to be heard in the concert hall more often. The last of the poems,

Blanik, named after the mountain on which sleep the Hussite warriors who died in the cause of their country, is a decidedly uneven work and because of its similar rhythmic patterns suffers in performance if it is preceded by *Tabor*. The best of its pages are the lyrical ones, and the opening depicting the sleeping warriors is poetically impressive.

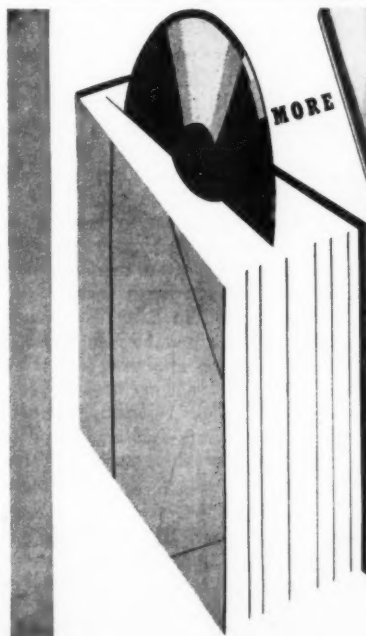
A decade ago Talich and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra recorded the entire six poems, and his performances of all of them are splendid. I still prefer his versions of *The Moldau* and *From Bohemian Fields and Meadows* to all later versions. It has always been a source of regret that Victor did not see fit to repress this European set, particularly around the time of the fall of Czechoslovakia. It is not impossible that a new performance of a couple of the others—particularly *Tabor* and *Blanik*—would arouse public interest at this time. Indeed, it seems to us that one of these would have been a more profitable venture at this time than this disappointing duplication. —P. H. R.

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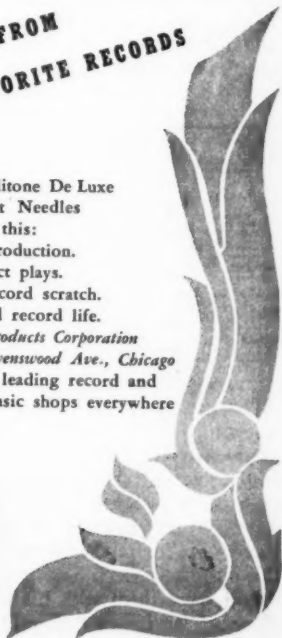
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SUPPE: *Morning, Noon and Night in Vienna*; played by the London Philharmonic Orch., direction of Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia disc 71439D, price \$1.00.

▲ Let us turn to our friend W. R. Anderson's review in *The Gramophone* of January, 1940, when this record was first issued. "A show piece indeed. The opening is bigger than I remember to have heard it made at concerts, and rather more massively impressive: I'm not sure if it needs it, but this kind of music can do with a little added makeup. The soloing is benign indeed, and the sprightliness on side 2 is thrown off with all Sir Thomas' well-known determination to work for his side, even if nobody knows what particular goal it (i.e., the composer) is aiming at. There is something slightly comical in this rally-stuff, which runs the gamut from A to B. I harkened fascinated to the phrasing of the *soigné* L.P.O. . . . do not miss Sir Thomas in this thrilling production." One can't add much to this, except to point out that our own Arthur Fielder has done a good turn for this overture also, although Beecham has the final say with his deft manner with detail and his more subtle shading. The recording is eminently satisfactory.

— P. G.

Concerto

BACH: *Concerto in E major* (for violin and orchestra); played by Adolf Busch and the Busch Chamber Players (5 sides), and CORELLI-BUSCH: *Prelude* from the *Sonata in F major*; played by the Busch Chamber Players (1 side). Columbia set M or MM-530, three discs, price \$3.50.

▲ There is an old adage about never staring a gift horse in the mouth, but the permanency of a recording sooner or later makes one do this sort of thing; it simply cannot be avoided. After Szigeti's consummate performance of the *D minor Concerto* (Columbia set 418), admirers of this artist have been hoping that Columbia would favor them with his interpretations of the E major and A minor concertos.

However, the exigencies of performance do not always permit even the best intentions of the recording companies to be achieved, particularly in these difficult times when the Musicians' Union exacts so much of those companies.

Let it be said at the outset that Busch gives a more appreciably stylistic account of this work than either Hubermann or Menuhin offered. Young Menuhin's set was always the most valued, for he had collaborating with him that admirable stylist and valued musician Georges Enesco, but Menuhin's style was somewhat tentative and precious. Moreover, the recording did not offer a sufficiently clear balance between the soloist and the orchestra. My quarrel with the Hubermann performance was based on the coarseness of the tonal quality, and although his slow movement revealed a depth of insight that Menuhin did not achieve, the accompanying orchestral sound was not good.

There is excellent clarity of line here, but not quite the balance that I, for one, would like to hear. Busch, who is soloist and director, permits the ensemble to submerge itself just a little too much for the good of the figuration of the orchestra whenever his solo violin is heard. There are sections in all three movements in which, despite the aid of the eye (reading the score), the ear does not apprehend the actual pattern of sound behind the soloist; all one hears is an effect of harmony. Busch's interpretation reveals the integrity and honesty of his musicianship, but it is stolid and often tonally rough and lacking in the graciousness and flexibility which we find in Szigeti's playing. Fulfillment of stylistic values in itself is a virtue which merits applause, and there is much to be said for a performance like the present which aims for artistic probity. And, when all is said and done it is the realization of this essential value which will undoubtedly place the present set before all others.

Columbia has given Busch and his ensemble good tonal reproduction but the records I heard were none too smoothly surfaced.

In view of the finely played excerpt

The American Music Lover

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from a Corelli sonata, I believe Columbia would do well to have this ensemble record a group of orchestral chamber works. The present *Preludio* is a most appealing piece, curiously suggesting source material for Mascagni's sentimental *Intermezzo* from *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

— P. H. R.

Chamber Music

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Quartet* (for strings), *Opus 49*; played by the Stuyvesant String Quartet. Columbia set X or MX-231, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲ This work owns more of the characteristics of a suite than of a string quartet. But then one should not approach this music with ears attuned to the quartets of the classical and romantic schools. This is not to say that it is a dissonant work of the modern school, for the quartet is quite consonant; in fact, there are many who regard it as reactionary. Our first acquaintance with this score came through the recording made by the Yorke Quartet (March, 1940). Although the performance was a capable one, it lacked the special sympathy and fervor the Stuyvesants have for the work. The Stuyvesant happens to be one of my favorite quartets, perhaps because I know all the players fairly intimately and have discussed this work as well as many others with them. Further, when the leading members of the group, Sylvan and Alan Shulman, were with the Kreiner Quartet, I worked with them in their first recordings—the FRM versions of the Boccherini *A major Quartet* and an early Mozart. My first reaction to the Shostakovich was hardly a friendly one, but after I heard the Stuyvesants play it several times, and noted their unmistakable enthusiasm for it, the work took on new meaning. I am quite willing to agree with them today that it is an excellently contrived string quartet, even if it isn't developed along traditional quartet lines.

Some of my reflections written after my first hearing of the work can be repeated. The opening *moderato* owns a Haydn-esque flavor, although it isn't written in the sonata form. Perhaps it is its orthodox harmonic treatment and its geniality of

mood that suggest Haydn. The second movement is songful, and possesses a suavity which is characteristic of the composer in a sentimental mood. The third is an agitated scherzo, and the finale makes good use of dance-like tunes.

The tonal quality of the recording improves with playing; there was a fuzziness in the reproduction at first but this cleared up with the use of a chromium needle.

— P. H. R.

STAHL: *Three Trees*; played by the Compinsky Trio. Co-Art disc 5015, price \$1.59.

▲ Willy Stahl is a painter as well as a composer. As a painter he is known for his almost daring use of splashes of color. The present work, inspired by the Compinsky Trio and dedicated to it, is based on the composer's painting known as "The Three Trees" — a cypress, of the oriental species, a willow, and an oak. The present work is mood music, or what some term musical paintings. It is in four connected sections, the opening part being a short prelude which, according to the composer, is intended to establish a mood of anticipation. Of the musical paintings of the trees, Stahl tells us, the cypress' "low-roofed, spreading branches sway with the gentle ocean breezes across the near-by cliffs of the Pacific." "There is a certain refined appearance which characterizes the willow with its soft, sad dignity;" and "the oak stands as a veritable apotheosis: its towering strength . . . symbolized by a dynamically measured pulse whose source seems to spring from the very roots themselves."

There is a considerable controversy about music of this genre. One recalls Sibelius' incidental music to *The Tempest*, in which the Finnish composer has a musical picture called *The Oak Tree*. Stahl's music is not reminiscent, however, but is individualistic. There are harmonic boldness and rhythmic life in these tone paintings; their weakness lies in a lack of form, but since the pieces are short—not more than sketches — one finds them easy to listen to and tonally effective. Since the sponsors of disc claim that "in hearing the music one feels he is also gazing upon

the painted canvas", it seems to us, that they might well have provided a reproduction of the painting.

It is again the playing of the Compinsky Trio which engages our admiration and respect, for the performance here leaves one with the firm conviction that one has heard the work under the most favorable circumstances. The recording is excellent.

— P. H. R.

Violin

BACH (arr. Kreisler): *Gavotte from Partita No. 3 in E major*; and KREISLER: *Rondino on a Theme of Beethoven*; played by Fritz Kreisler with Franz Rupp at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1022, price 75c.

▲ Presumably this is one of the discs that Kreisler waxed in London in 1937, for the label says "Recorded in Europe." The *Rondino* has always been an irresistible encore whenever Kreisler played it, and he doesn't disappoint us here. The playing of the Bach is a shade under the other; Kreisler could have put a little more energy into it. The recording in both cases is well contrived.

— P. G.

Keyboard

TREMBLAY: *Prelude and Dance*; played by John Crown. Co-Art 10-inch disc 5014, price \$1.33.

▲ The Canadian-born American, George Tremblay, identifies himself with the group of ultra-modern composers. He employs the twelve-tone scale with its accompanying dissonances. If one does not find the present pieces of great consequence, this does not mean that they are not effectively contrived. There are suggestions of three influences, but these are slight since the composer's individuality is unquestionable. In the *Prelude* both Debussy and Schoenberg are recalled; in the *Dance*, it is Schoenberg, who has been called the father of the twelve-tone scale, and modern jazz that have influenced Tremblay. The brevity of the *Prelude* may leave the listener unaware of the composer's ingeniousness on first hearing;

in this piece Tremblay employs a mirror-like effect by a contrary movement of the harmonic structure. The *Dance* is said to suggest a tribal gyration of the African jungle. Both pieces are conceived in a percussive style of piano writing which was popular among composers in the 'twenties. This is music of the intellect dealing less with thematic structure than with harmonic and rhythmic effects.

The pianist, John Crown, plays with forcefulness and conviction; there is in his performance no suggestion of the calculation that the technical difficulties of the music might well occasion in another pianist. The tonal clarity of the recording is well attained.

— P. H. R.

VILLA-LOBOS: *Rag Doll*; *Cardboard Doll*; *China Doll* (Nos. 1, 2 and 3 from *The Baby's Family*); played by Guiomar Novaes (piano). Columbia 10-inch disc 17355-D, price 75c.

▲ These are pleasant little morceaux, estimable more for the playing of Mme. Novaes than for any musical values. That one ignorant of the titles could guess them on hearing the pieces, is doubtful. The composer presumably wrote them for a young child. Villa-Lobos is Brazil's great musical nationalist, and Mme. Novaes is one of that country's musical ambassadors. The music here is simple in structure and easy to grasp, and the rhythmic patterns of each piece if not unusual nevertheless show a spontaneity of creative impulse. The piano tone is good, and the record we heard was smooth.

— P. G.

Voice

DONIZETTI: *La Favorita* — *O mio Fernando* (in Italian); and TCHAIKOVSKY: *Jeanne d'Arc—Adieu forêts* (in French); sung by Risè Stevens (mezzo soprano) with orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Columbia disc 71440, price \$1.00.

▲ Geraldine Farrar has aptly said that the photograph becomes more valuable with each succeeding generation to the vocal student and the music lover. The great singers of each decade must be given

due consideration, and it is their inviolable right to be heard in arias which have long been popular in the repertoire of their respected voices. Undoubtedly most collectors will have recordings of both these arias, for both have been waxed a number of times, but that does not mean they might not want a new one by a singer of these times.

Miss Stevens sings both these arias with admirable style, her legato and avoidance of unnecessary chest tones being particularly commendable. Although her voice is not lacking in warmth, hers is not an all-pervading emotional quality, nor is she capable of attaining the climaxes which others realize in both of these arias. But her musicianship always remains praiseworthy. Both arias are much longer than the versions heard here, and since they are quite repetitious, they are almost always cut in performance. Miss Stevens' cuts are not those, however, which are usually sanctioned, and one feels that in at least the Donizetti aria the cutting has not been too felicitously handled. Perhaps it would have been better for the

singer to have left out the recitative and simply sung more of the aria.

Though Miss Stevens does not succeed in effacing the memory of Onegin's singing of *O mio Fernando*, she certainly does contribute a better-sung version of *Adieu forêts* than either Jeritza or Anderson. This aria really belongs in the soprano category, and in our estimation is more effective when sung by a soprano voice.

Mr. Leinsdorf gives the singer satisfactory orchestral support, and the recording has been well made.

— P. G.

DENZA: *Funiculi Funicula*; and ROS-SINI: *La Danza*; sung in Italian by Militza Korjus (soprano) with Chorus and Orchestra. Victor disc 11-8289 price \$1.00.

▲ Militza Korjus made these recordings when she was singing at the opera in Berlin and her popularity was at its height there. This was about seven years ago. Undoubtedly the political ties between Italy and Germany had something to do with the realization of this record; one

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PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN OF SEVENTY

Harold Bauer

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VIEWS AND REVIEWS

QUARTERLY BOOK-LIST

QUARTERLY RECORD-LIST

"By far the most important of the American periodicals from the point of view of musical scholarship is the *Musical Quarterly*. It is a serious review, cosmopolitan in character, and has published valuable contributions from most of the leading writers of music in Europe and America."—*Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*

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can well imagine an enterprising Nazi-minded record official suggesting to Miss Korjus that these songs, tremendously popular in Italy (so popular in fact that they are virtually regarded as folk songs), would find a large, appreciative audience both in Germany and Italy. Miss Korjus' popularity in England and this country had not yet established itself at that time.

Although the singer gives buoyant and vivacious performances of both selections, it should be noted that neither song is essentially for her type of voice. Admirers of Korjus' reedy—quasi oboe-like—voice will, however, find their idol here vocally at her best; there is a lilt and youthful charm in her singing of both songs. She alters the tessitura of both to permit the use of some high soprano effects, but this does no material harm to the selections. It is unfortunate that the chorus employed did not catch the spirit of the lady's singing. The replies in Denza's *Funiculi Funicula*, also known as *The Merry Heart*, are quite perfunctory. Really to hear this song done justice to, one should hearken to a band of light hearted students in Italy singing it.

Rossini's *La Danza*, based on the pattern of the Neapolitan tarantella (a gay and whirling affair), is essentially a man's song, and no one has ever sung it better on records than the late Enrico Caruso.

— P. G.

LOEHR: *Where My Caravan Has Rested*; and FOSTER: *Gentle Annie*; sung by John Charles Thomas (Baritone) with Carol Hollister at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1023, price 75c.

▲ Thomas has such a fine voice that one can sit back and just enjoy the sound of his resonant masculine baritone. I've often thought that it was the sound of Thomas' voice that attracted most people, that and his excellent diction. But, although his voice is heard to advantage in both these songs, to at least one listener he does not convey any true feeling in either song. The Loehr has little to commend it; it is a stereotyped ballad, which one suspects Mr. Thomas sings because people are supposed to like it. But I wonder how many will find it worthwhile after one or two playings. Mr. Thomas' manner of singing

the word "them" is a disturbing element in otherwise flawless diction, and his use of portamento here is hardly commendable. There is much to be said for his manly, straightforward singing of the Foster song, although one would have wished for just a little more personal feeling.

The singer has been given good recording, and the balance between voice and piano is realistic. Mr. Hollister provides excellent accompaniments. In case someone acquires a record bearing the label of *Where My Caravan Has Rested* on both sides, as I did, the A side of the disc is the Foster song.

— P. G.

WAGNER: *Lobengrin*—*Each Lueften die mein Klagen*; and *Die Walkure*—*Du bist der Lenz*; sung by Astrid Varney (soprano) with orchestra, conducted by Erich Leinsdorf. Columbia 10-inch disc 17354-D, price 75c.

▲ The same remarks we made about Miss Varney's first record (issued in November, 1942) can be applied here. Her tendency to over-enunciate does not permit her to achieve a true legato. Nor does she convey the ecstasy of Elsa's song to the breezes. Her failure to realize more vocal nuance and a true pianissimo leaves much wanting in her performance. In Sieglinde's *Du bist der Lenz*, the singer does better, but here again her over-enunciation does not help to sustain the enthusiasm conveyed in her opening phrases. When a singer busies herself too much with details of pronunciation, the musical line does not progress smoothly.

Mr. Leinsdorf's treatment of the *Lobengrin* music is lacking in sensitivity, but is otherwise satisfactory. The recording is good.

— P. G.

BOOK REVIEW

(Continued from page 126)

present volume with considerable anticipation. It probably isn't Mr. Howard's fault that we were let down; the fault is undoubtedly our own since we do not see eye to eye with him in helping the uninitiated to enjoy modern music. However, the old adage about a little know-

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ledge occurs to us, and although that which is imparted here cannot be described as dangerous, it can be termed inconclusive. And that takes us back to the author's sub-title, for it seems to us that the bewildered listener might also find himself a bewildered reader.

— P. G.

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 122)

Berlin acquired his melody. It seems dimly familiar and darned if we like to be stumped in such matters. Maybe someone can enlighten us.

* * *

A letter from Thomas Mann to Joseph Szigeti, relative to the violinist's article in our October, 1942, issue, may be of interest to our readers. It was written the day before Christmas and reads: "Dear Mr. Szigeti:—Professor Arlt was so kind as to send me the attractive little booklet

of *The American Music Lover* with the surprising and charming article about the phonograph in the *Magic Mountain*. This little meditation has given me great pleasure; it may really be that in the future the gramophone chapter in the *Magic Mountain* will have a certain significance from the point of view of musical technique, and, in a way, has such significance today. The development which the phonograph has undergone since the days when I wrote my chapter is indeed surprising, but, as it goes, I was perhaps happier with my black box then and the thin sound of the records which it played than with the glorious sounds coming now from my loudspeaker . . . Very sincerely yours,—Thomas Mann."

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SOME RECENT POPULAR RELEASES

By VAN NORMAN

Tommy Dorsey is justly famous for being a superior bandsman and one of his most valuable assets is his ability to cash in on a trend until he has extracted every last drop of interest out of it. His most conspicuous trend in recent years has been his frequent and highly effective use of the small vocal ensemble known as the Pied Pipers in slow, generally rather lachrymose ballads, of which *I'll Never Smile Again* will always be the arch type. Since then there have been also the nearly equally successful *Just as Though You Were Here*, *There Are Such Things*, and now another candidate for the same identical type of popularity, *It Started All Over Again* (Victor 20-1522). To us, it seems definitely inferior to the other three mentioned above but in view of the present famine of new tunes it might conceivably turn out to be most successful of

them all. The reverse, *Mandy Make Up Your Mind*, is a jam arrangement and apparently was recorded some time ago, since both Joe Bushkin and Ziggy Elman are in it. . . . No one in the business writes better tunes than Harold Arlen when he's at the top of his form, and his latest effort, *That Old Black Magic*, must rank as one of the finest things he has ever turned out. It is an almost hypnotically appealing tune cast in a quasi-bolero rhythm with a lyric by Johnny Mercer that fits it like the proverbial glove. It might very well become as much of a craze as the last number this same pair of writers wrote, *Blues In the Night*, which is by way of being something of a landmark in the history of the American popular song. *That Old Black Magic* is no landmark or anything of the sort. It's just a slithery, slidy number of the sort one gen-

erally associates with Cole Porter and the first of what will probably be numerous recordings of it is by Charlie Barnet (Decca 1851) and a very good job too. The vocal is sufficiently seductive, the rhythm is precisely correct and Barnet contributes a few sax tootles of his own that are properly in mood. . . . A nice, rowdy song is *Move It Over*. As rowdy, if not as bawdy, as *Mademoiselle from Armentieres*. Servicemen will be singing it a lot, I think, especially the buck privates, for it expresses sentiments near and dear to the hearts of them all. Ethel Mercan does a swell lusty job on it, with the definitely brilliant assistance of a small male vocal group. In order to circumvent the Petrillo edict, no musical instruments are used (excepting a string bass, played by a non-unionist apparently) but they're not missed in view of the grand work of the vocalists who give it a rhythmic punch that's irresistible. *Marching Through Berlin*, on the reverse, is from the score of *Stage Door Canteen*, and is a good marching song. (Victor 20-1521). . . . Benny Goodman's *Why Don't You Do Right?* gives vocalist Linda Lee what is perhaps her best opportunity so far since joining Goodman and she makes the very best of it. (Columbia 36652). It's a spunky, sour-puss sort of a ditty and demands a very special sort of an approach, which Miss Lee gives it in abundance here. Orchestrally it is not quite so satisfactory. Quite possibly it was rushed through at the last second before the August 1st deadline. In any event, there is a bit of rather sloppy performance on it, even on the part of Goodman himself, which is practically unheard of. The coupling, *Six Flats Unfurnished*, is a moderately effective instrumental. . . . *The Road to Morocco* is unquestionably one of the funniest pictures of recent years. Quite incidentally (as far as their effectiveness in the picture are concerned) there are a number of extremely nice tunes in it. Written by the talented Jimmy Van Heusen, *Moonlight Becomes You* and *Constantly* are the ballads, good numbers both, and Bing Crosby, co-star of the film, since them in properly lush style. (Decca 18513). *Ain't Got a Dime To To My Name* and

The Road to Morocco, also, not unnaturally, from the film, are of a different type. The former is a good rhythm number of the sort that Bing used to sing back in his Whiteman days, while *The Road to Morocco* is conspicuous chiefly for some very sharp lyrics. (Decca 18514). . . . An elegant orchestral recording of the above-mentioned *Moonlight Becomes You* is afforded by Glenn Miller. (Victor 20-1520). Miller really spreads the color on with a trowel when he goes after a number of this kind, but if you like his sort of color (and everyone seems to) you can't get too much of it. There is no question but what Miller did a great deal to expand the borders of commercial dance arrangements during his two-year tenure as America's top-flight band. Its disbandment due to Miller's entrance into the service is a very real loss to popular music. . . . A curiously unpublished fact is the one that Duke Ellington is the writer of the currently popular ditty, *Don't Get Around Much Anymore*. How Ellington happens not to have recorded it we can't imagine. In any case, it is well enough done in straight garb by the Ink Spots, that extremely popular group. There is a virtually unlimited demand for recordings by vocal ensembles of this sort and the Ink Spots are, undoubtedly the most successful (if not the best) of the crop. Particularly in tear-jerkers like this one, the treatment given by the Ink Spots is probably the most effective possible one. (Decca 18503). . . . A new Cole Porter number quite in the best Porter tradition is his *You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To*. Like so many Porter tunes, it's in a minor key (up until the last few bars, anyway) and Six Hits and a Miss, another swell vocal group, do a rather snazzy version of it, in a Gordon Jenkins arrangement. (Capitol 127.) The reverse is a revival of a song from World War I, *Would You Rather Be a Colonel With An Eagle On Your Shoulder Than a Private With a Chicken On Your Knee*. . . . Shep Fields and his all-reed band do their customary sort of job on *Please Think of Me*, a current pop tune of promise, and a specialty of their own, *Take It Slow*. (Bluebird) .

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